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ABSTRACT

College level remediation programs are generally unsatisfactory because students tend to give these noncredit courses low priority and do not seem to transfer the skills learned to their content courses. In addition, because students are simultaneously enrolled in regular content courses requiring skills they have not yet developed, they often fail those courses before the remedial courses can be effective. To solve these problems, the University of Wisconsin (Eau Claire) has developed "adjunct" courses, freshman level content courses with two extra class sessions per week, during which reading and study skills applicable to the content course are taught. During inservice meetings, the content instructor and the adjunct skills instructor meet with advisors and support staff to plan the course. On the days the content instructor lectures, the adjunct teacher observes student listening and notetaking behavior. On alternating days, the adjunct teacher teaches students notetaking and testtaking skills and reading skills using a variation of the SQ3R technique. Support services for the adjunct courses include the academic skills center (individualized tutoring), a precollegiate program for disadvantaged students, and an intensive learning experience program in science, math, reading, and composition. The adjunct courses are currently being evaluated to determine their effect on grade point average and retention, but overall, the program appears to be quite successful. (HTH)

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ADJUNCT COURSES: INTEGRATING STUDY SKILLS INTO CONTENT COURSES

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at

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For decades (beginning with Harvard in the late 1800's) colleges have been seeking ways to provide help to the ever increasing number of students with the ability, but not the skills or self-confidence to do college work. Numerous non-traditional programs have been attempted with varying degrees of success. The most common effort at remediation has been the intensive care unit. Freshmen students are fed through programs consisting of one or a series of remedial courses in reading, composition, and/or math while simultaneously enrolling in regular content courses. These programs are generally unsatisfactory for three reasons. First, remedial courses are typically non-credit and, as a result, students tend to give them lower priority. Second, students don't seem to transfer skills learned over to their content courses. Finally, because students are simultaneously enrolled in regular content courses requiring skills they haven't yet developed, they often fail out of college before the remedial courses can be effective.

ADJUNCT COURSES

Our university has attempted to solve this problem by offering "adjunct courses." These are freshman level content courses with two extra class sessions attached per week. These adjunct classes are used to integrate learning and study skills into the teaching of the regular course content. Thus retention of students is increased in courses where they have traditionally failed and students have the opportunity to earn academic credit and improve their skills, while taking courses employing the same university standards common to any other section of the course.

Adjunct courses consist of two components - a content component and a skills component. The content component is a regular freshman level content course which high risk students need additional help for successful completion. Yet it must not be so difficult that a large number of students are assured of failure. Most importantly, it must be taught by a concerned instructor willing to put in extra time and effort. The skills component consists of two extra class sessions per week taught by a learning specialist in reading, writing, or math, depending on the requirements of the content course. For example, courses having a math base are taught by the math specialist, and courses requiring much writing are taught by the writing specialist.

The selection of the two instructors and their working relationship is vital to the success of the course. The two must be sensitive to educationally disadvantaged and minority students and possess the desire to put forth the extra effort necessary to aid students' growth both academically and personally. The content instructor is a regular member of the department offering the course. He/she has usually become interested in the adjunct program during his

attendance at a five day Seminar in Developmental Education offered every spring. He receives no extra pay for teaching an adjunct course. The adjunct instructor is a regular member of the Academic Skills Center and teaches one-two adjunct courses per semester in addition to his other work. The adjunct program has been so successful, however, that in some instances departments are hiring their own adjunct instructors because ASC staff are unavailable.

Adjunct Courses may be taught in either of two formats. In the majority of our adjunct courses, the content instructor teaches on Monday, Wednesday, and Friday, covering the same course content that he teaches in his other sections of the course. The skills instructor attends also, sitting in various spots throughout the classroom, observing individual students' listening and notetaking behavior (and informally discussing after class) and serving as role model for students. On Tuesdays and Thursdays, the skills instructor teaches the skills needed for success in the course, while the content instructor observes and serves as a content resource. Some content instructors observe only occasionally, but experience has shown that their presence is important. Both student attendance and participation are greater when they attend. Also, the adjunct classes serve as an inservice program for them. They tend to improve the quality of their own teaching as they observe the techniques of the adjunct instructor. The other and preferred format but one which is more difficult to implement, is the integrated approach in which the two instructors share time daily and, in effect, team teach the course.

Students advised into adjunct courses include:

1. Those students who are repeating the class after failing or dropping it in a previous semester.

2. Those students readmitted to the University after suspension for low grade point average.

3. Those students admitted to the University on probation due to insufficient units, low H.S. grades, or substitution of G.E.D. for H.S. diploma.

4. Those students returning to college after an extended absence from schooling.

5. Those students with learning disabilities or skill deficiencies identified by advisors or tests administered in the Academic Skills Center or during Freshman Orientation (a two day period during which students are administered placement tests in reading, writing, and math). Most students in the adjunct courses fit into this category.

PLANNING

Once chosen to teach an adjunct course, content and skills instructors

meet together with the adjunct support staff for a three hour inservice program. The first hour is used to provide an overview of the adjunct program and to introduce instructors to the support staff (advisors and Academic Skills Center staff). During the second hour, experienced instructors for adjunct courses share their experiences and suggestions, and new instructors have an opportunity to ask questions. Finally, each instructional team pairs off and begins planning its adjunct. Their working relationship is encouraged from the beginning; the relationship between the two instructors and between their two components are important aspects of the adjunct course. It is essential that the two be integrated, rather than two separate courses.

Using a handbook as a guide, the two first analyze each of the four major components of the content course, the four T's -- i.e., the teacher and his personality and style; the text, its difficulty, interest, and role within the course; the tests, the number and type; and the talk, or format of the classes. The content instructor has already planned the course in terms of these four factors; during the inservice, he and the adjunct instructor simply analyze them to determine which learning skills are demanded by the course. Both instructors are bringing experience to this decision: the content instructor brings experience in teaching the course, and knowledge of the kinds of problems students have with it; the learning specialist brings knowledge and experience with disadvantaged students and the learning process. Together they decide which aspects of the course are likely to cause problems and which skills require instruction.

Their decision, of course, is only tentative until they can determine the specific skill levels of individual students in the class. Four kinds of information are utilized to determine skill needs of students:

1. Scores of tests in reading, writing, and mathematics given during Freshman Orientation are sent to the instructors upon request.

2. Sometimes a study skills inventory or diagnostic reading test is administered to the class. This provides an individual and a class profile of skills.

3. Group informal reading inventories or cloze tests are often given to determine the kinds of problems students will have in reading the text for the course.

4. Content instructors are encouraged to test early in the semester to determine students' skill levels.

After deciding which skills to emphasize, the content and adjunct instructors discuss plans for integrating the teaching of these skills with the content of the course. Instructors inexperienced in teaching adjunct courses are provided with a resource manual which includes a discussion of specific skills problems of disadvantaged studets, resource information about each skill, and suggestions and handouts for each.

CONTENT OF ADJUNCT CLASSES

A 1971 research study of 302 college freshmen having academic difficulties showed that four out of five were experiencing difficulties as a direct result of inferior study practices (Butcofsky, 1971). The purpose of the adjunct classes is to build study skills of students so that they can be successful in both the attached content course and their other courses as well. Little lecturing or direct teaching of study skills is practiced. The intent is to provide an integration of skills with content, not a separate study skills course. The emphasis is on providing activities which force students to use efficient study techniques until they become habitual. The skills which are developed include scheduling/time management, text reading and notetaking, lecture notetaking, outlining, summary skills, test taking skills, listening skills, speaking and discussion skills, and problem solving. Following are examples of techniques used to teach each of the major areas.

Most adjunct students are freshmen from high schools in which lectures and lecture notetaking are uncommon; thus these students are at a loss in college classes in which lecturing is the norm. The adjunct instructor usually teaches the Cornell system early in the semester and periodically evaluates students' notes using this system. Frequent activities are used to provide students with practice using effective notetaking. Sometimes a transparency of the adjunct instructor's notes or a videotape of a segment of the previous content class is used so students can check their own notes for completeness and format, and the group can discuss the instructor's lecture style. Sometimes students write key words or summaries for either their own notes or a transparency of the adjunct instructor's notes. Faculty are encouraged to help in teaching efficient notetaking by beginning each session with a review of the previous class and an overview of the one about to begin, by ending each class with a summary, and by using the blackboard to emphasize key words and ideas.

Students enrolled in adjunct courses generally have poor reading skills and often experience frustration and failure when faced with the massive amounts of reading required in most college courses. The adjunct instructor teaches students how to read the text, using a variation of SQ3R designed for use with the text used in the course. Throughout the semester students preview chapters, map chapters, discuss graphs and other aids, and do various activities forcing them to use the organizational structure of the chapters. The adjunct instructor also discusses internal and external concentration problems, and encourages students to set goals for themselves in these areas. Content instructors are encouraged to discuss purposes for reading each chapter, the amount of thoroughness expected, and to make actual reading of the text necessary for success in the course by including questions on the tests which cover information not given during the lecture.

The adjunct instructor teaches effective techniques for studying and taking the type of exam used in the course. Throughout the semester students are grouped to make up exam questions from the previous chapter or lecture; these questions are later used in review sessions before the exam. Students are also taught how to write summary sheets; usually before the first exam the class makes part of a summary sheet together. After this first exam a post-exam survey is given and used as a discussion guide to discover more efficient ways of studying for the next exam. Students are encouraged to set goals for improving their studying. Throughout the semester they are encouraged to ask questions about the kinds of exam questions to expect and the amount of emphasis which exams will place on the text, lectures, outside reading, etc. The instructor is encouraged to tightly structure the course by providing frequent tests, quizzes, and class discussions to ensure that learning is distributed and not crammed.

Other skills (vocabulary, essay exam writing, appropriate classroom behavior, time management, etc.) are emphasized whenever appropriate to the course. The atmosphere is an important aspect of the Tuesday/Thursday sessions. The adjuncts are designed to improve self-confidence and motivation as well as learning skills. Instructors make a point of showing personal concern for students. The first adjunct session is a get acquainted session for both instructors and students. This helps freshmen become comfortable in active participation in the class. If a student is absent, the skills instructor will either call him or talk to him about his absence before the next class; the importance of attendance is stressed heavily. If a student received a low grade on a test or quiz, he is scheduled to talk with the skills instructor about where he went wrong and how he can improve his score on the next test. Evaluations are administered frequently to provide students with constant feedback.

SUPPORT SERVICES

Adjunct courses focus or pull together all campus resources for high risk students:

> Academic Skills Center. Skills instructors meet individually with each student in the Academic Skills Center early in the semester to discuss his strengths and weaknesses and which ASC services (i.e., individualized tutoring in basic skills or minicourses in specific study skills areas) which he should utilize. They also make a point of occasionally asking each student about his work in the ASC. As a result of this visit, students seem to feel more comfortable seeking out ASC services.
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> Precollegiate Program for Disadvantaged Students. This is an intensive five week learning experience in an integrated program of science, math, reading, and composition. The

program serves approximately 40 minority and disadvantaged high school graduates each summer. Those who successfully complete the program receive three credits and are endorsed for fall admission. Most of these students are advised into adjunct courses in the Fall.

Special Advising. This component includes special advisors for disadvantaged students, for minority students, and for older returning students. These special advisors serve to complement department advisors and to insure that low-skilled students are channeled to appropriate support services. Students are referred to them on the basis of low high school records, recommendations from department advisors, counselors, or instructors, and from screening tests in reading, writing, and mathematics given to all entering freshmen. Special advisors are concerned with the whole student: they assist in evaluating each student's strengths and weaknesses, advise him appropriately according to these strengths and weaknesses, and provide information about (and encouragement to seek out) campus resources he needs, and generally serve as a central contact for the student. Each student signs a contract with his special advisor in which he agrees to utilize specified support services and to have his academic progress monitored.

EVALUATION

At the end of each semester, each team of instructors for an adjunct course evaluates the course in the following ways:

EVALUATION IN TERMS OF OBJECTIVES FOR THE COURSE:

A. What skills were originally planned to be developed?

B. What was done to develop these skills?

C. How was skill acquirement measured?

D. What content-based objectives were planned for the course?

E. How was student achievement of these objectives measured?

EVALUATION IN TERMS OF STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT AND BEHAVIOR:

A. What was the grade distribution within the course? Is this pattern significantly different from other sections?

B. Were there any changes in student behavior? What were they?

C. Did students attend content and adjunct classes regularly?

D. Did students complete assignments and exams as scheduled?

EVALUATION IN TERMS OF STUDENT PERCEPTIONS:

A. Have students evaluate both the content and skills parts of the course.

In addition, the adjunct courses are currently being evaluated to determine effect on GPA and retention. These studies are incomplete at present.

Overall the adjunct course program has been quite successful. The program began in 1976 with two courses, Psychology 100 and Sociology 101. This semester ten adjunct courses in seven departments are being offered.

There have been problems connected with the adjunct courses during these five years. For example, motivating students to attend extra classes and do extra skills assignments for which they usually receive no extra points or credits can sometimes be difficult. Also, students in the courses have a wide range of skills (especially during spring semester during which conditional students enter the university and enroll in adjunct courses along with second semester freshmen who have already taken one-two adjunct courses). Another problem is that students who take more than one adjunct course often complain of overlap during the first couple of weeks in the semester devoted to preliminary skill teaching. Finally, faculty willing to devote the extra time and effort are sometimes difficult to find.

However, on the positive side, learning skills are much easier to teach in this format; students perceive their relevance and importance because course materials are used to teach the skills. Using course material also provides the repetition of content these students need. Also, students are forced to practice the skills over and over again so they tend to become regular study habits and to be transferred over to other courses. Students also tend to see the need and take advantage of other support services during and after they've taken adjunct courses. Overall, students seem to emerge from adjunct courses with better study skills, greater self-confidence and satisfaction about the academic environment, and generally an improved chance of success in college.

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